Circular Letter No. 120

January 26, 1929

SELECTED COMPOSITIONS REPRESENTATIVE
OF OUR STANDARDS.

GOVERNMENT OF PORTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
SAN JUAN

January 26, 1929.

Circular Letter No. 120.

Subject: SELECTED COMPOSITIONS REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR STANDARDS.

Supervisors of Schools,
High School Principals, and
English Teachers of High Schools
and of Continuation Schools:

Dozens of experiments have shown that if a number of English teachers grade a paper the chances are that there will be as many varying opinions as there are teachers; resulting from this condition are experimentations towards standardized tests. But the situation remains that the English teacher has to grade themes with nothing to guide him as to standards except his own opinion based on his own experience. As a consequence, two teachers, although equally conscientious and equally prepared, may give the same mark to themes which vary greatly in quality. Many a teacher has quite frankly confessed that on facing a set of papers, it is indeed puzzling to determine by what "yardstick" they shall be measured. Of course, it will remain impossible to eliminate entirely the subjective element; but something can be done to assist in the solution of the matter.

To a large extent the variations in standards that appear in the work of different teachers is due to the lack of exchange of ideas between the teachers of different grades in our school system or between teachers of the same grades in different towns. A sort of isolation that surrounds each teacher as he grades his themes results in the variations in standards.

In order to take steps to acquaint each teacher with the work of others doing the same work as himself and to acquaint him with the work of the students of the grade higher and lower than the one he is teaching, the following plan has been carried out. Of the themes mailed to this Department to show the use of the two marks in grading, one for mechanics and one for content, four themes have been selected, one from each year's work. These themes are simply representative of the work considered barely satisfactory according to standards now being used; they do not represent the highest nor the lowest but something typical of the majority.

All the teachers will please read these themes; thereby, some information may be gained as to what is expected of his own students in order to meet the general standard. In some cases teachers may have classes exceptionally well prepared whose work is above the average; in such cases reports will be appreciated giving information on methods whereby superior results were achieved.

An examination of the themes shows the phases of our work which need strengthening, the points upon which we shall have to work in order to raise the standard. By this no criticism of the work being done is implied; but it should always be our desire to improve our methods and our product.

Comments on the situation as revealed by these themes will be welcomed.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) JUAN B. HUYKE,
Commissioner of Education.

VD:mb
encl.-

(Encl. C.L. No.120 -1928-29)

THEME TYPICAL OF WORK CONSIDERED BARELY SATISFACTORY ACCORDING TO STANDARDS NOW BEING USED

Freshman

WHY I WAS LATE YESTERDAY

Verb-had ever been

Omit because-begin new sentence- insert and
Comma

Omit but;begin new sent., insert I- idiom
Verb

Comma

arrived at - past

No paragraph

at once -

paragraph-Sp.- comma
Comma

Comma

Paragraph; verb
Verb; unity

Verb;most; clearness

It was the first time I was late because I woke up late. As I live so far from school I had to walk very fast but just when was reaching I remember of a book that I need and turn back. In ten minutes I went for the book but whe. I reach again to school it was more tha eight o'clock.

My teacher sent me to the office but the principal was busy and could no give me an excuse rapidly and I had to wait. I also lost my Home Economic cap and as Mrs. Williams does not want us with our uniforms incomplete she told m that I was going to get a poor mark for that day. When I return home I made my cap again and the next day I obtain and excellent mark. Yesterday was the day I suffer more because all my ideas were unsuccessful.

Grade:

Mechanics -- D
Content -- C
Average -- D

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THEME TYPICAL OF WORK CONSIDERED BARELY SATISFACTORY ACCORDING TO STANDARDS NOW BEING USED

Sophomore

FERDINAND MAGELLAN.

P.

P.
Sp. Word.
Sp. Verb.

Columbus ideas about the shape of the earth was not believed by must of the sientifics of that age, but there were some persons who thing that Columbus was right.

No paragraph. Cap.

Among the second there was a portugese called Ferdinand Magellan.

Sp.
Verb.
Cons.
Sp. Verb.

He sailed from Spain and under the Spanish flag for a tripe arowmd the world. He went directly to the South American coast and going around it reach Cape Horn. It was in winter and the climate prevented him to continue and he wate until winter was over.

Verb. Sp.
Aux. Verb.
Sp. Verb.

He reach the straight which now bears his name. There the winds were so strong that one of his vessels destroyed and another vessel became affraid and return home.

Verb.
Verb.

Magellan continue the voyage with only three vessels and reach the Phillippine Islands. There the king received him with great honors and much gold was given him.

No paragraph.
Comma.
Cons.

In that island Magellan had to fight with another tribe of Indians and in the battle he was killed and many of his men.

Sp. Tense.
Verb.

The remainding men sail away with two vessels and went around Cape of Good Hope to Spain from where they sail three years before.

Grade:

Mechanics - D
Content - C
Average - D

THEME TYPICAL OF WORK CONSIDERED BARELY SATISFACTORY ACCORDING TO STANDARDS NOW BEING USED

Junior

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born in the year 1912, my native town being Río Piedras.

Prep.
Comma
Cap.

By that time, of course, Río Piedras was not as important as it is to-day but it had already american schools, and when six years old I was sent to one of them. There I learned very much and had stayed there for a long time had it not been for my parents

Tense

Wrong word
Comma

movement to Santurce. Here my father had his business and he wanted to be near his warehouses.

Verb
P.
Verb
Comma - P.

But the change of residence didn't affected my studies, for I came to school here too. I entered the "Padre Rufo School and after been there for a year I went to another and so on until I got to "Labra" where I obtained my diploma.

Comma

Sentence too long
P.

Wrong W, Prep, Comma.
Sp., Tense
More, Sp.
than, ever

In the year 1924 we made a trip to Spain and I enjoyed it very much because I had never travelled before and I didn't have the smallest idea about tours. I thoug that when we could get there I was going to see typical scenes and that we were going t travel in oxen-carts and in "burros" but I was dissapointed when I get there because in Barcelona I saw so many cars and buses that I had never seen before.

Prep. Pl.
Prep.

Some years later I have made other trips and in vacation I never stay ashore, for I get a ship and travel to any place th ship goes to.

Grade:

Mechanics -- D
Content -- C
Average -- D

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THEME TYPICAL OF WORK CONSIDERED BARELY SATISFACTORY ACCORDING TO STANDARDS NOW BEING USED
Senior

- - -

MY EXPERIENCE OF THE HURRICANE

Sp.
Verb. Verb.
Verb. Idiom.

Comma. Insert as
Insert: to resist
one; Comma. Prep.

at home. Prep.

Comma.
Verb.
Omit.

Comma.
Prep. Wrong word.

Comma.
Idiom.
S. S.

a
Idiom. Lost only.
clothes. ; Omit.
Add: stood firm.

On the twelveth of September the people of my community was alarm because a great hurricane was supposed to advance my dear little island. As I did not know what a hurricane was and I thought my house was strong enough I was not afraid for it.

About one o'clock in the morning of the thirteenth one of our neighbors called my father. He went to his store and the rest of us remained in our house looking to the dark night. About three o'clock we went to bed and at seven o'clock we were prepared for going to school but my father did not let us to do so.

When noon came about five families met in my house where we were spending a very good time. The wind was blowing hard; my house did not move but at three o'clock the roof of my house blew being attacked by the back part of one my neighbors house. That was terrible; I thought we were going to be left without home and began to cry. Fortunately we loose almost half or more of our cloth but we remained with our house.

Grade:

Mechanics - D
Content - C
Average - D